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ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 141610Z SEP 07
FM AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7329
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS BUCHAREST 001062

SIPDIS

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SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR EUR/NCE - AARON JENSEN

E.O. 12958, AS AMENDED: N/A

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [RO](#)

SUBJECT: ORTHODOX CHURCH ELECTS NEW PATRIARCH

11. (SBU) Summary. Metropolitan Daniel of Moldova and Bukovina was elected Patriarch, succeeding the late Patriarch Teocist after a 40-day mourning period. The new Patriarch reportedly represents a modernizing wing of the Church. His election may offer an opportunity to reopen discussions on a range of issues including property restitution and joint efforts to discourage the legalization of prostitution in Romania. End Summary.

12. (SBU) The Romanian Orthodox Church elected Metropolitan Bishop Daniel Ciobotea of Moldavia and Bukovina as its new Patriarch on September 12, following a 40-day mourning period for the late Patriarch Teocist. The election of the new Patriarch was marked by the church's public refusal to bring to light any of the possible successors' histories of collaboration with the Communist-era Securitate secret police. Politicians also weighed in, making public declarations as to whom they favored and in some cases working actively to thwart the National College for the Study of Securitate Archives (CNSAS) from examining the communist-era collaboration files of church leaders before the election.

13. (SBU) The death of Patriarch Teocist, aged 92, at the end of July led to a highly visible campaign filled with rumors, accusations, and calls for reform of the Orthodox Church, including demands that the Church select a new patriarch untainted by collaboration with the Communist-era political police. Media reported that both the late Patriarch, elected in 1986, and his predecessor had been Securitate informants. One member of CNSAS, Mircea Dinescu, alleged that most high-ranking church leaders had actively collaborated with the Securitate. The Orthodox Church reacted by saying that such allegations were aimed at discrediting the Orthodox Church at a critical juncture, and threatened to sue Dinescu.

14. (SBU) Media and NGOs urged the CNSAS to check the Securitate files of Church leaders before the patriarchal election, but the CNSAS was unable to do so because several political parties' representatives on the CNSAS Council boycotted its meetings, specifically from the PD, PSD, and PRM. Dinescu told the press that the files of some Church leaders had been destroyed in the early 1990's, and that Daniel's file allegedly was among them. Leading Church scholar and Ambassador to Paris, Teodor Baconschi, urged publicly that the new Patriarch should have a "clean past" in order not to be subject to blackmail.

15. (SBU) Many politicians made public statements supporting favored candidate and attempted to use the campaign for Patriarch to gain publicity. Even some Orthodox leaders expressed their support publicly for certain candidates, but others urged the political class and the media to not interfere with the Church's election of the Patriarch. The Orthodox Church refused to make public the names of the 186 members of the Electoral Church College (one-third of

whom were secular figures from politics, business, and academia) until the election day.

¶6. (SBU) The 56-year-old Patriarch is generally portrayed as a reformer. He is expected to continue to support the Church's position against the legalization of prostitution. He has been silent on the problem of restituting the Greek Catholic Churches as he had not had to deal with that issue while bishop in Moldavia. Daniel was active in shaping a restrictive Law on Religions passed by parliament last year; he headed the Orthodox Church's delegation to the inter-confessional negotiations on the new law. Some sources reported that Daniel also took a very tough attitude against other religions' right to access to Orthodox cemeteries.

¶7. (SBU) After his election as Patriarch, Daniel declared that his main goal would be the continuation of church tradition: "A patriarch cannot change the directions already established by the Synod and he is the guarantor that these directions are implemented.

It is a great difference because the Synod principle forces us to work together and go together. This is the meaning of Synod in Greek: joint trip. We walk together, we walk along the path of salvation." He added that he wanted the church "to be known for its multiple activities, because only some of them are currently known."

Patriarch Daniel also said that he would like the Church to obtain more support from civil society.